

Carroll County Rural Development Event

□

August 6, 2010

□

Hillsville, Virginia

□

I am pleased to join you in Hillsville today in marking significant progress in our efforts to expand and improve Carroll County's infrastructure, which serves the dual purposes of improving the quality of life for Carroll County residents and ensuring that the County can accommodate new business development and new jobs for its residents.

My top priority in representing the Ninth Congressional District is to encourage economic development and to create new jobs for Southwest Virginians. We are achieving that goal in various ways, including a broad effort to ensure that the infrastructure needed to support new jobs, whether at companies seeking to expand operations to new locations or at growing locally owned small businesses, are widely available throughout the region. Building new and expanding existing water and wastewater systems, providing access to broadband services, equipping the County's first responders, ensuring small businesses have access to the resources they need, and updating the County's schools are all critical components to this effort, and I have enjoyed working with Carroll County leaders over the years to advance projects in each of these areas of development.

Today, I am pleased to report that Carroll County has made great strides in meeting its infrastructure development goals. A significant amount of our progress has been aided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency, and I am pleased to welcome the Deputy Undersecretary for Rural Development to Carroll County this morning. I have formed a strong partnership with Rural Development officials, and I appreciate the hard work of the Agency's dedicated staff. Rural Development's significant federal investments in the region have helped us achieve advancements that benefit Carroll County residents in every corner of the County and Southwest Virginia residents across the region.

In Carroll County, in the last 20 years, the Rural Development Agency has invested, at my urging, \$86 million in Carroll County's infrastructure development efforts and the results of this investment can be seen throughout the County.

First, with the federal assistance totaling more than \$40 million, we have been able to build new and improve Carroll County's existing water and wastewater systems. With the benefit of the federal funds, the Carroll County Public Service Authority has been able to provide services to more than 2,000 additional customers. Fifteen years ago, the PSA provided public water and wastewater services to 1,000 Carroll County residents. Today, public water or wastewater services are available to more than 3,000 residents, and that number continues to grow.

In the past several years, I have been working with Carroll County officials to assist in the County's effort to expand its water and wastewater infrastructure into several areas of the County that currently do not have these services, including interchanges along Interstate 77, to accommodate new business and residential growth.

In the past two years, we have secured the federal funding to open up three new areas of the County for development by providing water and wastewater services. These areas are Fancy Gap, the Exit 19 area and Wildwood Commerce Park, and the Exit 1 area near the North Carolina line.

Last year, many of you here today joined me for the announcement of more than \$1 million in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency to construct a new public water system to serve the Wildwood Commerce Park at Exit 19 along Interstate 77. This project, construction of which is now underway and is nearing completion, will bring public water service to more than 300 homes for the first time from the Exit 19 area to

the Austinville community. Additionally, construction is also nearing completion on a new wastewater system to serve 34 residents and the Wildwood Commerce Park with the assistance of \$1.9 million in federal funding from Rural Development.

Last summer, we gathered again to announce that the Rural Development Agency was awarding a total of \$1.82 million at my request to provide water wastewater services to open up the Exit 1 interchange to development. Construction has been completed on the new water and wastewater systems for Exit 1, and 35 homes are receiving water services and the wastewater services are now serving the Loves Travel Center and are available for additional businesses locating in this area.

Last Fall we again made progress in opening up new areas of the County for development when we announced that the Rural Development agency was providing federal economic Recovery Act funds totaling \$8 million to provide water and wastewater services for the first time for the Fancy Gap area. I have long been working with Fancy Gap residents and officials to provide water and wastewater services in this area.

With its location along the Blue Ridge Parkway and Route 52 and its proximity to Interstate 77, Fancy Gap is an ideal area for residential and business development; however, the lack of wastewater and water services in the community has been restricting growth. As a result of the federal funds, construction will begin later this year for a water system that will serve approximately 200 homes and businesses in Fancy Gap and for a wastewater system that will serve 65 homes and businesses. I look forward to joining you later this year when construction begins.

Carroll County has also made progress in providing high-speed Internet services to residents. Just as first canals, then railroads and then highways were the major arteries of commerce in earlier eras, in the 21st Century, access to broadband will be a defining feature of economic success for rural communities. The Rural Development Agency has provided, at my urging, a total of more than \$250,000 which has helped the County establish the Wired Road Authority in partnership with Grayson County and the City of Galax.

As part of the Wired Road project, wireless towers have been installed at all Carroll County schools, a fiber optic network has been installed in downtown Galax, and wireless towers have been installed in Elk Creek and Independence in Grayson County. Additionally, last year's award from Rural Development enabled the provision of wireless broadband services to

an additional 360 homes and businesses in the region.

Funding secured from the Rural Development Agency has also been instrumental in the small business development that has occurred in Carroll County. The Agency has invested more than \$2.5 million in the development of the Crossroads Institute, which is another joint venture with the City of Galax and Grayson County, as well as Wytheville Community College.

Several years ago, I led an effort to create small business incubators throughout the region to encourage the growth of locally owned small businesses by providing local entrepreneurs with the resources they need to successfully start a small business. The Crossroads Institute serves as a small business incubator and educational center, and is a great success story in our region. 138 small businesses have received support for startup or expansion from the Crossroads Institute, and these businesses are now providing jobs throughout the region.

I have also worked with Carroll County officials and the Rural Development Agency to provide updated equipment for first responders and to provide updated equipment for the County's schools. Many of the County's schools are aging, and to provide students with the best education possible, the County is undertaking an effort to renovate and repair many of the County's schools. I am currently working with local officials to secure the federal funds to meet the County's school improvement needs, and I hope to soon join you to announce success in that effort.

I am pleased that we have been able to achieve such significant progress throughout Carroll County, and I want to thank the Rural Development Agency for its investment in the County.

In addition to Cheryl Cook, I want to extend my thanks to Ellen Davis, State Director for Rural Development, and Travis Jackson, Regional Director. Ellen and Travis and their excellent staffs provide outstanding to my office and to local communities seeking to advance their infrastructure development goals.

I also want to thank the County's Board of Supervisors for their foresight in meeting the County's infrastructure needs. The leadership of the Board has been critical to the success of

the County, and Wes Hurst, Chair, Dr. Tom Littrell, Vice Chair, Andy Jackson, Sam Dickson, Manus McMillian and David Hutchins who serve on the Board all deserve our thanks today.

I also want to thank Gary Larrowe, Carroll County Administrator and Executive Director of the Public Service Authority, and Dana Phillips, Assistant Director of the PSA for their dedicated work to improve the quality of life for Carroll County residents.

I also want to thank my Deputy Chief of Staff, Laura Lee, and my Director of Community Development, Derek Lyall, for their persistent and persuasive efforts on behalf of Carroll County projects.

The success we mark today is an outstanding achievement, and I want to offer congratulations to the Carroll County residents here today who are benefitting from the significant investments in the County's infrastructure.